



Sustainability starts with knowing your overarching goals, seeing which of your program elements are achieving those goals, and being creative about how to keep those elements integrated within your district and community. If the program(s) you implemented achieves the outcomes you were after and is a good fit for the needs of your stakeholders, your long-term sustainability plan may involve maintaining several program elements. If one or two program elements produced measurable positive results but others did not, your plan may focus on those elements only.

There are 6 major strategies outlined in this tool to increase sustainability of your program (s) or initiatives.

**Leadership:** Effective leaders understand that strategic planning is an important tool for identifying the systemic changes that can support an initiative's positive outcomes. Many models of strategic planning exist, and some may be better suited to your circumstances than others; but all strategic planning efforts should include a needs assessment, resource mapping, development of goals and objectives, and implementation timelines. Sustaining an initiative's positive outcomes is possible when it's leaders provide a vision of how the project's **functions** have a place within other community initiatives; identify infrastructure changes that institutionalize practices such as evidence-based curricula or new screening procedures; and connect their work to larger systems (e.g. policy and government agencies) and to groups and individuals within the community who have similar priorities. Fostering such connections can help you tap into the power, passion, and capacity to support your project's activities in the long term.

**Financing:** Far too often, sustainability is equated with obtaining additional program funding. Although money may be required to sustain your program's positive outcomes, it is often possible to sustain outcomes with less funding than the original grant provided - and

sometimes possible to sustain outcomes with no additional funding. Financial planning will help you identify the resources you need to sustain program outcomes. Seeking the integration of your program elements into other key programs within your districts or communities is one of the best uses of existing funding.

**Evaluation:** It is important to present your evaluation data and findings to the groups your project serves and those in positions to support your work. Policymakers and stakeholders need to know what problem your program addresses and what evidence you have that the program is working. Presenting key findings from your evaluation can gain your support including funding. Understanding the concerns stakeholders care about can help you decide what to present. For example, showing a school principal that your program has reduced truancy translates directly into dollars saved and better attendance rates - both of which are important concerns for school administrators.

**Partnerships and Collaboration:** Partnerships or collaborations among agencies or programs are most effective when connections are established early in a project and cultivated throughout its life cycle. Strong partnerships involve others who are interested in the goals of your project, are affected by the problems you are addressing, and can provide essential support and resources. Leadership of a partnership involves clarifying roles, running meetings, and defining a shared vision of how to work together towards the partnership's goals. Understanding the goals of other district initiatives or community providers, leads to a better understanding of how your program functions could integrate with theirs.

Partnerships and collaboration can help sustain program efforts. For example, delivering mental health services to children and youth in preschools or schools usually involves a partnership between the school and a mental health provider. Partnership can work together to sustain these services beyond grant funding by establishing revenue streams such as third party payments or local mental health funding.

**Implementation:** Excellence of program implementation that includes capacity building and policy change efforts can create sustainable programs and services without requiring continued funding. This level of implementation requires the participation of district and agency leadership, and an understanding of how to support lasting change in how school and agency staff does their work. Training staff in an evidence based intervention is just the first step towards creating lasting change in practice.

Building staff capacity to implement evidence-based interventions over time involves creating a supportive implementation infrastructure with several components. These include initial and ongoing training; designating and supporting supervisory staff to help implementers problem solve together around intervention challenges; and designing a permanent process and fidelity of implementation evaluation system. These components are needed to ensure that evidence based interventions are implemented with fidelity over time and will produce their expected outcomes.

### **Communication and Marketing**

Using communications and marketing skills to inform others about your program's goals and successes is a key way to create and maintain a base of support that can contribute to sustaining your program and its functions. Linking your communications plan to your overall strategic plan can help you reach your sustainability goals. Successful marketing and communications initiatives engage program participants and key community members, stakeholders and decision-makers. Developing an adaptable presentation about the problems your program addresses and how your program is reducing or eliminating those problems can help publicize your program and gain support and partnerships. Once again,

understanding your audience's priorities or goals, allows you to "market" your results within their context. Using social marketing to reach your target audience may also help to sustain your program by making your approach or intervention part of the community's norms and traditions.

*During the breakout sessions, you will be working with the Safe and Supportive Schools Legacy Planning Worksheet:*

The **Legacy Planning Worksheet** describes a six-step process to create an action plan to sustain your grant project's work. These steps are:

1. Identifying the programs and activities that have been most effective in producing positive outcomes supporting your project's goals
2. Determining which of these effective programs and activities are not supported beyond the end of the Federal grant and will stop (and stop producing positive outcomes) unless action is taken to sustain them
3. Prioritizing those effective programs and activities that are not yet sustained
4. Understanding the functions of these programs and activities
5. Identifying strategies that can sustain these functions (and thus the positive outcomes of your effective programs and activities)
6. Identifying action steps for implementing these sustainability strategies

*\*Adapted from the Legacy Wheel, originally developed for Safe Schools/Healthy Students Grantees by the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention*

<http://sshs.promoteprevent.org/project-directors/tools/legacy-wheel>